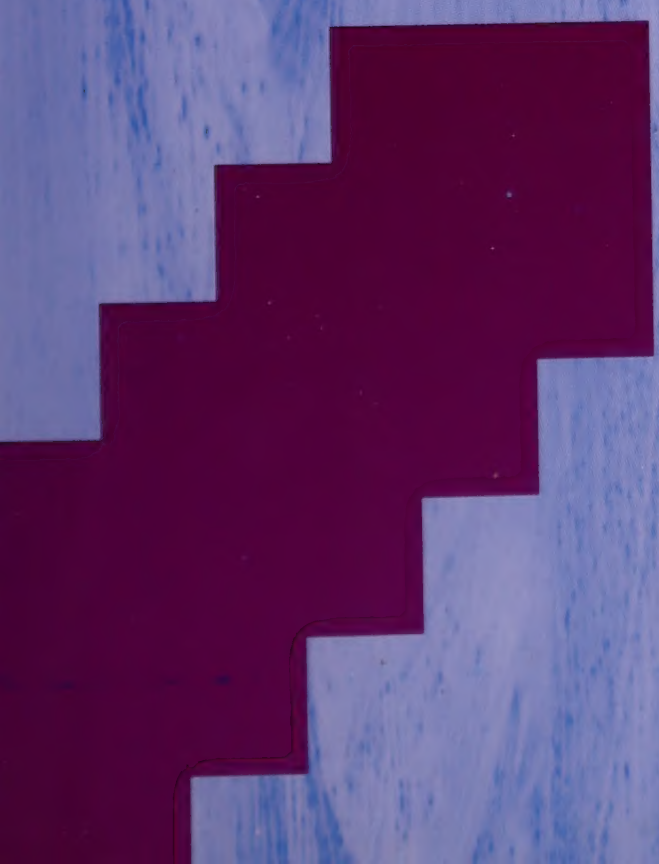




A Different Reality

**Exploring Changes Around
Men, Violence against Women
and Gender Equality**



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Equality



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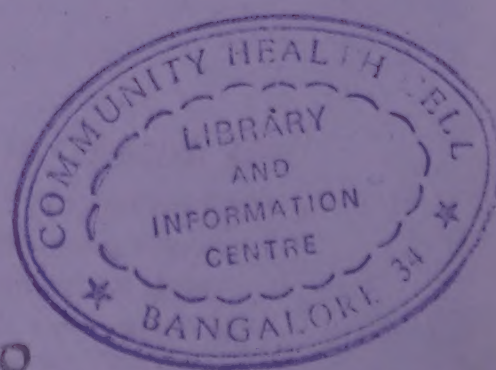
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Preface

It gives us great pleasure to put into your hands this study report. This study has been of great significance for us because it was an exploration of an unknown. We, as men concerned with the issue of gender equality and the widespread occurrence of violence against women, believe deeply that men have to take responsibility for changing the situation as it exists today. We also believe that social change cannot take place without individual change. But we did not know whether the collective journey we had embarked upon through MASVAW (Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women) was leading towards this individual change we believe is the bedrock of a larger social change. We had started out on an uncharted territory, with little more than our convictions to support us. This study has been able to provide us with some of the answers to our original questions, about whether men can change and in what ways. Alongside we have also been warned away from complacency about the risks and challenges. We hope to take these lessons into our future work, and we look forward to all the support that we can receive from our friends, well-wishers and all our colleagues in the women's movement.

The success of this study is in large part due to the energy and enthusiasm of Liz Mogford who took a chance to come all the way from Seattle, USA to understand India, and in turn helped us understand men and their motivations for change in rural north India. This study emerged from a spontaneous quest, and was completed through the voluntary contributions of MASVAW members from various districts all over Uttar Pradesh. Colleagues from SAHAYOG, not only provided logistic support for the study, but were instrumental in providing insights into the social realities of rural Uttar Pradesh. We would also like to acknowledge the unstinting cooperation of the friends and family of the respondents, without which this study would not have been possible.

We look forward to receiving your comments and feedback on the report and we request you to get in touch with us for additional information about our work.

Abhijit Das
Satish K Singh



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Context

Gender inequality is the foundation for a majority if not all kinds of violence against women. In addition to more overt types of women's abuse, inequality leads to structural violence that preconditions women's opportunities at every stage of life. True equality between men and women is an ideal that women in the feminist movement have been struggling to achieve for decades. It makes sense that women have fought so hard to improve their status; they stand to gain much if they achieve equal rights and treatment. However the notion of gender equality cannot exist unidimensionally and needs the presence if not the actual engagement of men as well. This leads to a more perplexing question, why men, particularly men who enjoy the unearned power and advantage of living in a patriarchal society, would join the struggle to equalize gender relations. Some people argue that any increase in women's power can only come about through a corresponding decrease in men's power. If this is the case, then is it possible that a man would voluntarily work to "disempower" himself. Would he do it out of pure altruism, or are there personal benefits that he might reap? If indeed he does, for whatever reasons, are there any personal costs that such men must face as well?

MASVAW (Men's Action for Stopping for Violence Against Women) is an alliance and a campaign of men and organisation working on gender issues committed to reacting to, and reducing incidents of violence against women. MASVAW is primarily active in the state of Uttar Pradesh in northern India and has some members in the state of Uttarakhand. MASVAW believes that violence against women is not only women's issue but also a larger social issue and a human rights violation, and is working towards the creation a more gender equitable society.

MASVAW activities across the state have led to a large number of men's initiatives to prevent violence against women and to educate men about the issue. Men are now actively engaged in seeking redressal and invoking peer pressure. However these events, important as they are in themselves, are not sufficient evidence that men can change towards the acceptance of egalitarian values and behaviours, without which gender equality is not possible. This study seeks to understand whether the men who are key volunteers of MASVAW embody the changes that they wish to see.

Gender Inequality and Violence Against Women in Uttar Pradesh

The north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP), despite having a population of over 175 million (equivalent to the seventh largest country), is one of the most backward places in the Indian sub-continent. It has a deeply entrenched caste system and is also



amongst the poorest states in the country: the widespread poverty also leads to seasonal and annual migration within and outside the state as unorganized sector workers, with practically no state support and attendant vulnerabilities.

The status of women in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh in India is apparent from the fact that women's literacy gap between men and women is 27%, and the Gender Disparity Index at 0.520, both being the second lowest in the country. Maternal mortality is the highest in UP and women bear a disproportionate burden of responsibility for contraception. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) figures for 2005 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Uttar Pradesh ranked second in the ratings of recorded crimes against women. Amnesty International has published a special report investigating Violence Against Women in the states of UP and Rajasthan¹.

Gender Inequality in Uttar Pradesh

| Index | India | UP | Position* |
|------------------------|-------|--------|-----------|
| Literacy -F | 54.3% | 42.97% | 3 |
| Literacy Gap | 21.61 | 27.06 | 2 |
| Life Expectancy | 61.4 | 56.4 | 2 |
| LEB Gap (F - M) | 1.3 | - 1.3 | 2 |
| IMR - F | 73 | 104 | 3 |
| IMR Gap (M-F) | -5 | -6 | 2 |
| Maternal Morality | 606 | 398 | 1 |
| Sex Ratio (F:1000M) | 933 | 898 | 5 |
| Gender Disparity Index | .676 | .520 | 2 |

* Position denotes position from the bottom of the list
Data computed from Census 2001, National Human Development Report 2001; SRS Maternal Mortality Study 2006.

A survey report published in 1999 found that 46% of all men surveyed in the state admitted to physically abusing their wivesⁱⁱ; an earlier study found that men

consider wife battering as their natural rightⁱⁱⁱ. In addition to the regular staple of domestic violence, *dalit* women in UP have to contend with caste-based violence; woman also face cultural violence¹ and incidents of violence by state actors. The media in UP does cover violence against women (VAW) but largely as a sensational crime issue; additionally media-persons act as moral police, echoing community outrage over women exercising choice.

Violence against women issue still remains a peripheral issue and is also largely seen as only a 'women's issue' not a social problem or a human rights violation. Since close male relatives or relatively powerful perpetrators are likely to be involved in VAW, most NGOs have been reluctant to take on such issues and challenge local established social hierarchies; preferring to implement development programmes that address women's practical needs.

¹ Such as widow burning or "Sati" and young women either being killed for choosing a partner from a different caste or religion or coerced into marrying someone not of their own choice


Introduction to MASVAW

Men are culpable: both when they inflict the violence, and when through their silence they endorse violent behaviour in other men. Although not all men are violent towards women, they accept their privileges as men and do not protest gender discrimination. Men oppose gender equality when they fear that women's development will lead to a loss of their control over women, loss of male privileges and opportunities. However, there are men who wish to promote social justice, who are uncomfortable with aggressive masculine behaviour, yet are unable to express gentler emotions due to peer pressure. It is imperative that men see themselves as part of the movement towards gender equality and take collective social responsibility to end violence against women. However, it may be a difficult effort for individual men on their own; moreover most men lack analysis and articulation on these issues, they have no tools to start a discussion.

MASVAW attempts to provide men with a space to explore a different way of being masculine, and to understand how equitable gender relations can benefit both men and women. In the last five years MASVAW has spread over forty districts of Uttar Pradesh; encouraging men to take a strong personal stand against violence against women, to build opinion against VAW and to support women survivors. The network now includes youth in university and colleges, rural adolescents, school and university teachers, media persons, social activists, academicians, and local elected councillors in rural areas. There are 15 district-level chapters of MASVAW and they actively intervene in cases of VAW in their district with help from local media persons. Over a hundred NGOs and many hundred individuals in Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal are involved with the network. Members of MASVAW have also started working with men in rural communities to promote responsible partnership for women's reproductive health and rights.

MASVAW attempts to change social norms around gender inequality and VAW through a wide range of activities. These include interventions in schools, colleges and universities, on the streets, in tea-shops and in all places where there are men. The "Sixteen Days of Activism" between 25th November and 10th December has been a crucial period for launching large-scale awareness campaigns and rallies. Celebrating the International Women's Day, collaborating with women's organisations across the state has been another strategy. Innovative approaches are employed with young men and boys in educational institutions. Youth are encouraged to debate, paint, discuss films and engage with other youth and men towards building a deeper understanding of the issues of VAW and gender inequality. MASVAW has also been mobilizing media persons who could shape public opinion, and trying to convince them that sensational reporting of crime against women needs to change towards demands for gender justice.





MASVAW members across the state have also been very active in responding to incidents of violence against women. Reports of violence against women have increased in many villages and districts. Local action is being taken against violence by warning the offenders and organising local neighbourhood watch groups. MASVAW members are facilitating the filing of First Information Reports (FIR) at police stations and in collaboration with women's groups participating in conducting fact finding studies of reported incidents of VAW. MASVAW members in one university have been responsible for the constitution of a Sexual Harassment Committee in the institution and have even pressed the committee for the punishing an employee who was found guilty. MASVAW volunteers have also collaborated with women's organisation for ensuring relief and rehabilitation for survivors of violence.

Against this canvas of a wide range of activities across the state, the one questions that remains foremost among the leadership of MASVAW is that 'is there some change happening among men towards the creation of a more gender equitable society'. In order to understand the process of change MASVAW and SAHAYOG² commissioned this study.

Introduction to the Study

The Study Questions - The study is based on the exploration of the stories of nine men who are exemplary for their dedication and work in the MASVAW movement. Each of them is a MASVAW volunteer, adding these hours to his already busy family and professional life. Each man has been struggling to produce social changes on both a personal and a public front, changes which sometimes expose him to opposition and criticism from others. Based on the understanding that being a "MASVAW man" is not always an easy process, the study attempted to understand why men are making such efforts. We believe that if we can understand what drives a group of exemplary men, then maybe we can share their successful ideas, experiences, and wisdom with other men, thereby encouraging more people to join in the effort to eliminate all forms violence against women in Uttar Pradesh, India, and beyond.

Our study focused on these questions: Who are the MASVAW men and why are they involved in the MASVAW movement? Has MASVAW changed them in any way? If so, how, and what have been the positive and negative consequences of these changes? What specific things about MASVAW facilitated or influenced these changes?

Study Methodology – The stories or case studies was based upon in-depth interviews with nine leaders within MASVAW at three

² See Annexure 1 for an introduction to SAHAYOG and its relationship with MASVAW

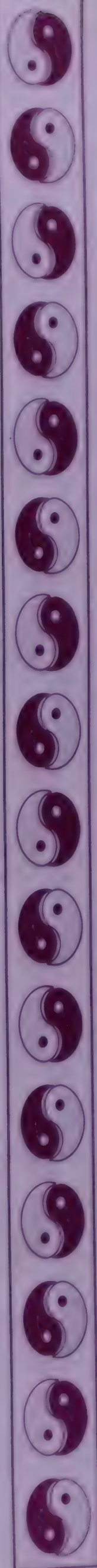
different locations across UP. The individuals were selected deliberately but this choice was vindicated at a group meeting of the regional MASVAW groups. During the group meeting the purpose of the study was introduced and MASVAW members were encouraged to discuss the issues. Following the group meeting in-depth interviews were conducted with the principal respondents. In order to get complete stories the interview with the main respondent was carried over into a second or third interview in some cases. The stories were supplemented, verified and triangulated through interviews with a close "female private contact" (usually his wife) and a "public contact" (a friend or colleague) of each man. However incidents mentioned by one respondent were not deliberately cross-checked.

The interviews were conducted in Hindi, by a local research associate, and tape recorded after obtaining verbal consent. The interviews were then transcribed and translated into English. Narrative analysis of the interviews was done by reading the transcripts over and over again.

The MASVAW men in the study - The nine men who were included in this study do not represent the general male population of central and eastern Uttar Pradesh. They were intentionally selected because they are exemplary and their experiences might be used to motivate other people. They chose to join MASVAW in the first place, suggesting that they were willing to critically evaluate the system of patriarchy rather than simply reap its benefits. The interview questions therefore focused both on men's past attitudes and behaviours, their present ones, and on the degree to which they believe any changes that have taken place can be credited to MASVAW. We heard stories of the evolution in men's gender perspective and learned how MASVAW has propelled them to a new level of understanding and action towards gender equality. Their story was also built through the responses of their private and public contacts.

These nine men were from three locations across central and eastern UP, two of these were large towns whilst one was a rural location. Their age varied from 25 to 55 years, and seven out of the nine were married. Two lived of them lived in a nuclear family structure while seven of them lived in extended or joint family systems. Their professions were varied and ranged from teachers in a university, the director of local NGO to a small businessman and a farmer.

Limitations of the study – In this study we wanted to know whether men can change and how men have changed both ideologically and behaviourally. We limited the study to a clearly defined group of men and so these findings cannot hold for all men, but it certainly can hold for some men. Even though we gathered the evidence, both from the men and from people who know them very well, we can't really 'prove' that they have changed. Even though we have learned about these men's and their contact's thoughts on how much the man has



changed, we do not know the exact 'extent' of change because we did not conduct this investigation over time. We also wonder whether one can objectively measure change in gender related attitudes and behaviour, even by an external observer. We realise that by asking the respondent himself to describe his own behaviours, we were necessarily introducing a positive bias; it's likely that he wants to come across as a decent person, and his friends and family also want him to be seen as one. We have tried to correlate and triangulate the findings from different sources for verification. We have also tried to find consistency and congruence between thought and action to find whether a person actually practices an ideology.

Study Findings

The study report begins with a description of the men prior to joining MASVAW and an exploration of what might have made them different from 'typical' patriarchal men. Then it turns to a discussion of each of the study questions. In the last section, we discuss some of the potential risks men may encounter in the process of change and suggest what MASVAW can do to lessen these risks. All names have been changed in this report to avoid identification and possible embarrassment.

About the MASVAW men

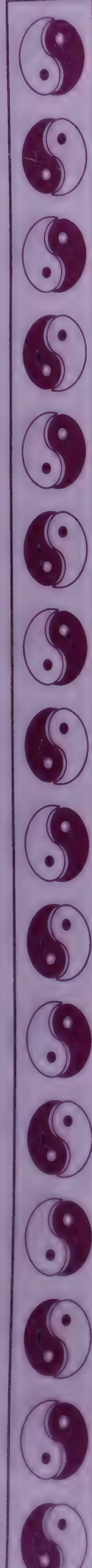
Most of these men showed prior leaning towards social activities

- Many of the respondents were already involved in various forms of social work where they had some exposure to ideas about women's inferior social status. Some men had begun challenging the norms of tolerance surrounding violence long before they joined MASVAW. One of the MASVAW men directed a women's development organization, which is how he came into contact with MASVAW. Another had been volunteering for a local women's empowerment NGO, exposing him to the opportunity to attend MASVAW trainings. One respondent had already been volunteering for an anti-VAW organization and had set up small groups of students to talk about violence cases at his university. Having heard of his prior involvement, MASVAW organizers sought him out as someone to help instigate the movement. Among those men who were not working specifically on women's issues, several were engaged in various forms of social work. One of these men told us that being motivated to react to injustice and inequality is not something he developed since MASVAW.

Earlier also this was in my behaviour. I used to think I was a little more sensitive than other people. I thought that maybe it was a gift from God. For example, sometimes my mother used to give me money and say 'go and take the wheat to the mill' and midway if I used to meet any beggars, I'd give 4-5 R to that person. I also had the habit of sitting at the railway stations. I used to observe the people are getting very easily into the AC compartments but a lot of pulls and pressures take place in the sleeper classes.

Testimonials by the MASVAW men's public and private contacts repeatedly confirm that the men were sensitive to issues of social justice prior to their membership in MASVAW.

Women had played an important role in their sensitivity towards women's issues -Our interviews provide us with interesting insights about the reasons behind the sensitivity these men display towards women in general. Although all of our respondents were sensitive



men even before joining MASVAW, they had not always been this way. Some of them had practiced abusive and discriminatory behaviour that they had modified years before hearing of MASVAW (and then further modified with MASVAW). One man, Sameer, had previously been very violent but ceased physically abusing his wife several years earlier. Another man, Rahul, slapped his wife just a month after they had gotten married, but then stopped. And another, Avdresh, formerly believed many 'myths' about women that he had dropped well before joining MASVAW. An interesting pattern emerges here. In each case, the man's pre-MASVAW "transformation" resulted from the intervention of a woman –his wife. We also noted that other respondents had been significantly influenced by their daughters or sisters prior to MASVAW.

Sameer – winning back his wife Sameer describes himself as a formerly violent and angry man. "I have fired guns at people, I have hurled bombs; I was a violent man. I eve-teased girls, did vandalism, and so on". He tells us that he had physically, sexually, and verbally abused his wife in the past. While he credits MASVAW with transforming his life in deeply substantial ways, we also learn that he had begun to change several years before his introduction to MASVAW. His behaviour change was instigated by his wife: she left him. This event occurred seven years ago, after Sameer and Kamla had been married for eight years. Here is the story in Sameer's words:

Earlier when we quarreled I used to abuse my wife a lot, used to pick up a rod. I've beaten her up. Once I beat her so badly –kicked her – that she left the house. Her father took her away. It took me a week before I realized that I'd done something wrong. Eventually I started talking to others about it. She had begun typing school; I'd go there and watch her from a distance. I didn't have the courage to talk to her. Her other colleagues went and talked to her on my behalf, trying to get her to come back home. They realized I was sincere and tried to get us back together. But she always said no. This continued for several months. I discussed it with some elders and they told me "you have to go bring her back, not let other people talk for you. You have to tell her that you made a mistake." So finally I went over to her place. I courted her and tried to make her fall in love with me³.

Eventually Sameer's efforts paid off and Kamla came back home. From that day forward, he no longer physically abused her (although he said that he continued verbally and mentally abusing her until he joined MASVAW).

³ Sameer uses very strong love words as he tells this story, saying "in hindi....". It is remarkable for a man to talk about love in this tender way, signaling that he is not ashamed to feel and express these emotions. It steps out of the bounds of typical masculinity.

What unfolds in this story is a transition in which Sameer moves from disrespecting to respecting Kamla. Her intolerance of his behaviour instigates the process and her refusal to return home so easily makes him fight that much harder for her acceptance. His struggle to win her is like a courtship seven years into their marriage. It is a remarkable departure from the typical manner in which a husband and wife are joined through a dowry-based exchange. Traditionally a wife is equivalent to a unit of property – property whose value is so low that it must be increased through the material assets of a dowry. Ordinarily men don't have to work to win their wives; on the contrary, a women have to woo a man through her desirability and by offering a competitive dowry. In contrast to this is Sameer's story. Since he had to labour and change to gain Kamla's acceptance, she took on *human* value to him. She became something to prize, to cherish – a real person, not an asset.

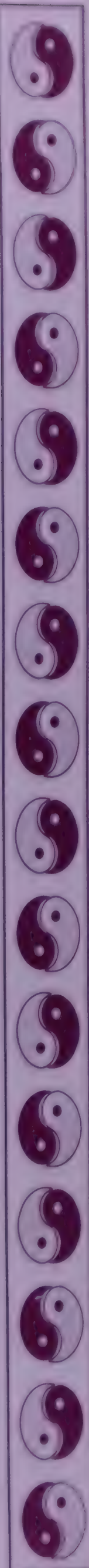
Sameer was transformed by a "critical incident," Kamla walking out on him, and because of this incident Sameer was already a more sensitive man before he joined MASVAW. He had suffered a past loss from which he was forced to grow, paving the way for future growth. Behind this critical event was Kamla's initiative.

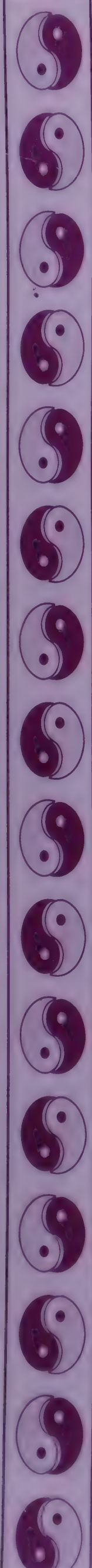
Rahul: influenced by Pinki from the outset. Sameer's "critical incident" occurred several years into his marriage, and his wife suffered a lot of abuse before finally leaving him. In contrast is the case of Rahul, whose wife, Pinki, made it clear from the start of their marriage that she would not tolerate certain behaviours, including violence and being controlled. Pinki's means of conveying her message was (and continues to be) the use of verbal threats against her husband. Both she and her husband gave repeated examples from their past that make it clear that Rahul became more gender-sensitive as a result of her reactions to his behaviours.

Pinki describes Rahul as an ideal partner, emphasizing how lucky she is to be married to him. But she also tells us that part of the reason he is so ideal is that if he wasn't, she would do something to force him to change, such as leave their home. For example, Pinki describes an incident when Rahul hit her one month after they got married.

Earlier it [anger] happened only once when we had just gotten married. We were talking about something at night while we were in bed and he slapped me. I also got angry and so I slapped him back. I told him "don't think I'm like other wives whose husbands keep on hitting them and they don't say anything. If you slap me once, I'll hit you at least four times." In the morning when I got up, I told everybody that Rahul had hit me during the night.

Pinki reacted to Rahul slapping her by fighting back, making it clear to him that she would not accept being hit. Then to reiterate the point, she shamed him in front of his family by telling everybody that he had





hit her. She goes on in the interview to say that Rahul felt very badly and never did anything like it again. Whether he would have hit her again if she had not reacted in such a forceful way is something we cannot know. We can only surmise that her strong reaction had some effect on how he felt.

Rahul does not recount this particular incident in his interview, but in a different story he acknowledges the important role of his wife in making him more sensitive to women. It is about when she first moved in with him after they got married. He was accustomed to having everything arranged exactly as he liked it when he lived alone, but once Kamla moved in, she began slowly to rearrange things. He said:

Then one time I was out of town for four or five days and when I came back everything was changed. I was very angry and said "What is this? You shouldn't have done this!" She replied "What's the harm in what I've done?" and I said "No. This is totally wrong and you will not touch anything in the future." Then she told me "If I can't touch any of your things, then you can live alone in your room – I won't live here."

Then I realized that I had been a bit harsh. She told me "for you I left my parent's house and now I'm living with you, so if I've shifted something in your room, it's not such a big deal." I thought that what she was saying was right. But it had always been my nature that nobody can touch my things. She was very angry and said "if you don't want to live with me then leave me." From that incident I realized that I should not do like this.

...

Now I've been married for four years, and I never ask my wife to bring my shoes or bring my clothes. And at that time I realized that she has left her house, we should not behave like this. And this type of feeling was before joining MASVAW.

Pinki defended her perspective and in so doing, changed Rahul. Certainly, Rahul was sensitive enough to listen to her in the first place. But if Rahul had married a different woman, someone less insistent on defending her point of view, then it is difficult to tell how he may have turned out different as well. It is likely that his self-examination would still be there, but without having someone point out that certain behaviours are unfair to her and without hearing good case for changing his behaviour, Rahul may not have progressed as far as he did. His wife introduced him to the idea of change, and he brought along his willingness to listen to her. In his words:

Even if I was not associated with MASVAW I would have worked on this front, but not with the same intensity. After my marriage, a lot of changes have taken place. It would

have continued but many myths would not have been broken down.

Avdhesh – learning from a progressive wife The third case involves a marriage that has always been characterized by gender sensitivity. Despite this, Avdhesh describes how he used to believe certain “myths” about women and hold some traditional values about the “ideal woman.” For example, he believed stereotypes about male and female sexuality: that a man must “prove himself” on the first night of marriage, that a woman who dresses modern wants sex, etc. He attributes the shedding of those myths in part to conversations with his wife. His wife, Sangeeta, also narrates incidents in which she says that she “moulded” Avdhesh to help him become more gender sensitive.

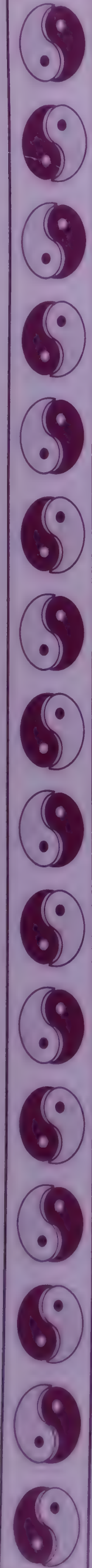
From the beginning, Sangeeta had a progressive mentality about women’s roles. She recounted that she never believed in wearing the symbols of marriage – a sindur, bindi, sari. “Why should society slot women into roles and then snatch them away once her husband or father has died? I don’t believe in it,” she said. At first her husband had no problem with her beliefs but over time, as other family members pressured her to conform to tradition, he joined them. He wanted her to appease everyone. She said that she objected, saying to Avdhesh “what’s more important, the symbols of a wife or a living wife?” She was able to convince him completely through a discussion:

Avdhesh and I only sat for one day discussing these issues. I explained to him that it’s not that I’m trying to say that I’m unmarried or interested in other relations by not wearing these symbols, but rather that I don’t believe in all of this. He was totally satisfied in my explanation and we never had to discuss it again.

This passage demonstrates that Avdhesh is a good listener. While initially he had doubts about Sangeeta not wearing the symbols of marriage, he was open to hearing her point of view and allowed her to allay his fears. In his own interview, Avdhesh also attributed his progressive gender perspective largely to Sangeeta.

In another example, Sangeeta describes the degree to which she believes she has influenced Avdhesh through their communication and mutual understanding. For example, in terms of housework and child care, she says that she “delegates” roles to him. “If I say, then he will do everything, even clean my child’s potty. But if I don’t, then he will not.” Sangeeta also gently monitors Avdhesh’s behaviour around gender-sensitivity:

Sometimes if certain differences come across and he slips out certain sarcastic remarks – after all he’s a man – then I immediately say that ‘you are a MASVAW person, you are



gender sensitive, and this is your way of behaving?' Then he immediately gets back to normal.

This is an example from the present, but Sangeeta has been influencing Avdhesh's behaviour since they got married. Through the combination of her encouragement and his open-mindedness, Avdhesh had become a more progressive man long before he joined MASVAW.

Two important lessons emerge from the examples of Sameer, Rahul and Avdhesh. The first is that women play an essential role in making these men sensitive by giving them crucial opportunities to learn and grow. The second is that each man is willing to seize these opportunities. Ultimately, it is the combination of both the man's willingness to self-examine and the wife's pushing him along that results in some of the men's exemplary pre-MASVAW attitudes and behaviours.

Daughters and sisters Wives are not the only females that contribute to making MASVAW men gender sensitive before they join MASVAW. The daughters and sisters of our respondents also have had an impact on them, although here the relationship is indirect. Of those men in our sample who already have children, half of them have solely or mostly daughters⁴. Two of our respondents have several daughters (four and seven) and no sons. Our surmise is that parenting many daughters and no sons, or bearing a son after bearing daughters, creates the opportunity for a father to challenge the social preference given to boys.

Male-child preference is a fact in Uttar Pradesh. It is difficult to combat at the individual level because Northern Indian society is structured to make life easier and more prestigious for parents with sons. Girls are equated with the burden of hefty dowries while boys are considered assets to parents. The pervasive joint family system guarantees security for parents from their sons, who will live with and support them in old-age. In addition to these material factors are the countless ways in which social norms favor males over females, from considering males to be more intelligent to blaming females for many social problems, such as premarital pregnancy (which in many cases results from rape). Given the social realities of patriarchy it is unfortunate yet not surprising that many parents would rather have a son than a daughter.

No he hasn't ever expressed any sadness, whenever I see him, he considers his daughters his sons. To the extent that his mother-in-law gets irritated that he is always with his daughters. He said but these are my sons, they will give me whatever I have to get (the life insurance thing). He gives them the same love and affection that other people give their sons.

⁴ Notably, those men who have only sons also happen to be men with very influential wives, including some of the men described above.

...when I conceived for the 3^d time and I was about to deliver, that night I told him now you have to take a decision between my life and a son. Decide whether you want a son or me. I am not going to deliver another baby after this, whether I have a girl or a boy. Then he asked me 'don't you want a son?' I said "No. I will not undergo so much pain to give birth to a male child." And he said, "if you have the courage to fight society if somebody says anything wrong to you, then I don't have any problem. I have two daughters who are like my sons." He has never treated my two daughters as girls.

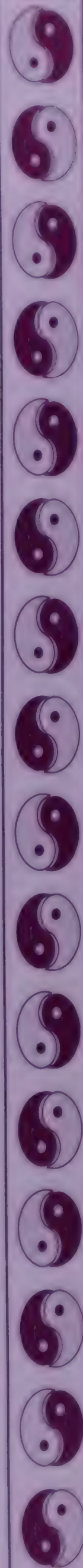
Of course, it is probable that the men in our sample with many daughters continued to have many children because they (or their wives) wanted a son. However, based on what we learned in our interviews, they have treated their daughters "as sons." We heard accounts from wives, colleagues, and the men themselves describing how even before MASVAW these men gave their daughters numerous opportunities that aren't socially prescribed for girls. For example, one wife with daughters only said that she always wanted sons but her husband was never concerned about it.

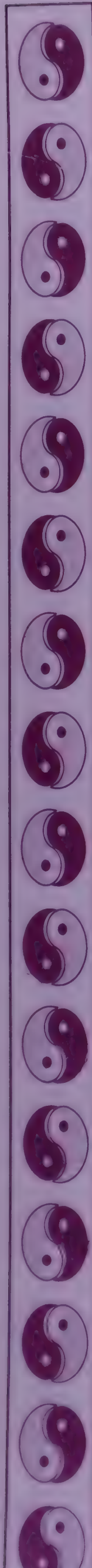
Did your husband ever desire more sons?

I had a desire for sons. He never wanted it, in fact he said "have you seen those people with four sons? They're in a bad state! Why are you worried, we will educate [our daughters] like you, they go out, it will be great."

While the respondents did not directly attribute men's positive behaviour towards daughters to the fact that they happen to *have* daughters, this is obviously an important reason to consider. Men with daughters – particularly those who do not have sons – are presented with the choice either to feel cursed and resentful or to find some peace and acceptance in their issue. Even if they wanted sons, once they have girls they get to decide how to respond. We have good evidence that this group of MASVAW men have not contributed to the cultural bias against girls.

Perhaps the circumstance these men were given by nature – that of parenting daughters rather than sons – provided them the opportunity to exercise a different attitude than the traditional bias. If, instead, the same men had sons, they could have practiced male-preference unchallenged. But since they had daughters and no sons (or had daughters before having a son), they were forced to confront the societal norm of male-preference on a personal basis and arrive at some response. They were primed by circumstance to value daughters as they'd value a son. In this manner, having a daughter is an indirect factor that may have contributed to making these men more gender sensitive before MASVAW.





Finally, one of our respondents directly attributes his pre-MASVAW gender sensitivity to the influence of his sisters. Growing up surrounded by sisters made him more empathetic to the needs of women.

I was always more sensitive than other boys towards women because I grew up surrounded by girls, in a joint family. I was more sensitive towards women I felt close to before joining MASVAW. If I found that something was wrong, then I denounced it, like passing comments or discussing girls, or teasing. I did not do these things.

In all of these cases, we argue that the presence of a female either directly or indirectly gave our sample of men an opportunity for growth. But this opportunity had to be met with the man's willingness to self-evaluate and change. We suggest that this willingness is a prerequisite of the successful "MASVAW man." Does all of this mean that even if they had never come into contact with MASVAW, these men would be the same people that they are today? Not at all. Our interviews demonstrate how MASVAW propelled the men to a new level of knowledge and action.

How have these men changed because of MASVAW?

Earlier it was as if we were like sticks, but now we have started bending. – Raju

I wasn't doing anything before joining MASVAW. When I woke up, [my wife] would fold the bedsheets. When I brushed my teeth, she would bring the water. I thought, "This is my right. Without money I got a servant. My father purchased this servant for me." I ordered "do this, do that." But after joining MASVAW, I realized actually I'm doing a very wrong thing. – Dev

While many of the nine men we selected were already atypical, MASVAW further changed them in quite dramatic ways. Interviews with the men, their colleagues, wives, friends, and parents contain examples of evolution in their thoughts and behaviours. In this section we outline the impact of MASVAW on our respondents, divided into different types of change.

New definition of violence and recognition of my own violence

When we asked men what they've learned from MASVAW, they unanimously say that they've come to the realization that violence against women refers to much more than physical abuse. For example, one respondent tells us:

I used to think that things like beating up your wife or rape constitute violence but now I think that doing something

without a wife's permission or consent is a kind of violence. If a woman wants to say something and a man stops her from expressing herself, even that will count as violence.

They all describe this broadened definition of violence that labels the system of patriarchy as a structure of violence. The respondents also describe the personal consequences of adopting this broad definition of violence. It forces them to acknowledge that they, too, are violent. We heard many instances of men personalizing violence through a new evaluation of their own actions. For example, one unmarried man says:

When my mother and I used to watch TV, I never used to think that asking for a glass of water from her is violence. ... Small things which I used to do at home like speak loudly, say words like "What do you know?" I never considered them violent, but now I do. I know that I don't physically abuse my mother but I do put mental pressure on her. So my thinking has changed completely.

Many additional examples of the realization of their own violence came up in our interviews, all of them revolving around the men's non-egalitarian behaviour.

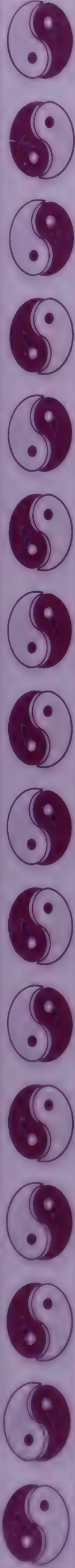
Realization that I must change myself first. Many men reported that they came to the realization that if they want to eliminate violence against women they must first eliminate the violence they commit themselves. Prior to this, they imagined that fighting violence meant stopping physical abusers. One man remarked: "First I change myself. If I change myself, it means I have become MASVAW." And another man said:

Initially I thought I would only work with others. I didn't think I wanted to change myself but later realized if I don't make change within myself first there's no way I can bring change in others.

One of the points emphasized by MASVAW is that in order to be an agent of change, you must first be able to change yourself, starting with the recognition of your own participation in the system of patriarchy that you are trying to dismantle. You must know what it means to deprive yourself of some privilege you felt was your right or do some work that you previously didn't consider to be your job. Only then can you expect another man to be capable of making changes in his life, too. These MASVAW tenets were expressed in many of the men's interviews.

Cessation of non-consensual sex. One of the most personal and powerful forms of violence that many men came to recognize in themselves is the practice of non-consensual sex. They told us that prior to being members of MASVAW, they never considered forced





sex to be a violent act. They didn't think it possible for a husband to rape his wife. Their perspectives on this reversed. Out of all the married men we interviewed, over half of them openly disclosed that they have changed their behaviour related to forced intercourse. Our interview guideline makes no reference to sex, but this is a topic that the men obviously feel strongly about. Some of their wives make oblique reference to this behaviour change as well. Here are some excerpts from the interviews:

You have said that earlier you did violence unconsciously. Can you give me an example of that?

Earlier I sometimes used to have intercourse with force. Now I'm very conscious to have it only with her consent....The most significant thing [I've learned from MASVAW] is that coercive sex is a form of violence.

This man's wife also references his past "naughtiness" more than once in her interview. Another MASVAW respondent explains:

Earlier I did what I wanted. But now I do according to her wishes too, and I do this in my physical relationship also. Now I take her permission and if she says yes then I do. Earlier I never thought about it. If I needed, then I did and I never thought about whether she needed. But now I realize that we can do whenever both want.

And the wife of this man says "If there's any decision usually I take it, regarding sex also. Earlier it was not like this."

Newfound respect, friendship, and partnership with wife. Many aspects of the men's relationship with their wives changed. They tell stories that demonstrate their increased respect for their wives. Some men describe a new friendship and partnership that had not been present before. The types of relationship they depict stray far from the traditional image of a married partnership in which many activities are gender segregated. What enabled men to form these friendships? One thing is that they increased their ability to recognize the expectations put on women and question why they should be any different from those put on men.

One of the MASVAW training activities is a game in which the men envision that they are a housewife. They are asked to close their eyes and visualize her average day, starting at five a.m. when she gets up to make *chai* and continuing throughout the day as she conducts her various house-bound duties. This exercise helps men gain both understanding and empathy for the work their wives are doing. You can see this process of increased empathy operating in the stories of some of our respondents, such as this one:

And in terms of helping my wife, I try to be sensitive here and I've improved my behaviour towards her. I like to sleep late, but I understand that if I like it, my wife likes it too. So I

don't want to disturb her because I get up earlier than her. Every day the electricity goes off at 9:00 a.m. so I have to do some things. If there's dishes left from dinner for washing, I wash them, I make the meal for my child, and I make tea for myself. I think my sensitivity increased so I'm helping my wife. Otherwise earlier, I never helped.

This respondent makes the mental leap from envisioning his own pleasure to envisioning his wife's; namely, if he enjoys sleeping in then she must enjoy it as well. He is able to put himself in her place not only when she is doing something difficult (such as labour) but also when she is doing something enjoyable (such as sleep late). He easily could demand that she wake up and tend to the dishes and making chai. The fact that he chooses not to deprive her of the pleasure to sleep in is a sign of respect and equitable treatment that you might associate with friendship, not with the gender roles typical of a traditional marriage.


Another example of newfound partnership is evident in this excerpt by Sameer, the respondent who formerly beat his wife:

[Before I joined MASVAW] my wife kept her distance from me, according to tradition. Now we talk to each other about anything. We eat off the same plate. She could never do that earlier. First she used to serve me and then go eat but now we eat together off the same plate.

Eating off the same plate is a symbol of equal status. It indicates that Kamla has assumed a position of greater value in to Sameer because he would rather eat with her than simply be served by her. Kamla also discusses their new relationship. In response to the question "what have been some of the benefits you've experienced since your husband joined MASVAW?" she tells us:

I have freedom to talk to you, I can talk to any man. Earlier he would tell me not to talk to men, if not directly then indirectly. He would tell me "why do you talk to these useless men?" Nowadays he says "you are quite capable for judging for yourself who is good and who is bad."

Something that we might associate with an increase in respect is the subsequent increase in trust that is evident here. The fact that Sameer now encourages his wife to judge for herself suggests that he trusts her enough to make her own choices. His former intimations that she shouldn't speak with "useless men" implied that he didn't value her judgment. Kamla even tells us that she and Sameer discuss becoming business partners and opening a store together, in which they'd switch off working at home and at the store. Sameer's public contact mentioned that when Sameer and Kamla attend meetings and events people often think that they are friends or siblings and are shocked to learn that they are married. They have constructed a different relationship through changes they both attribute to MASVAW.



This final example was provided by Diya, the wife of Deepu. In her statement we see another instance of a man making the connection between things that give him satisfaction and what might by extension bring his wife satisfaction.

Earlier he used to say "women are made for working at home, that's why they're doing it."... Now there's another feeling in him: why should women work alone at home? Why should they always stay at home wasting away? He thinks they should go out – that everybody wants to go out and get de-stressed like men. He says "why do you want to stay at home throughout the day? Go out, you'll feel fresh. At least go for buying vegetables, you'll get fresh air. You'll meet one or two people, and you'll feel much better."

Deepu himself experiences the benefits of going outside, catching up with friends, unwinding in the fresh air. Now he wants to share the same pleasures with his wife. Previously, he apparently never thought of it as something she should do.

All of these examples suggest that the MASVAW men are moving towards more equitable relationships with their wives. Being able to relate one's own experience to another person's suggests that you don't see yourself as hierarchically superior or categorically different. It suggests that these men are not putting their wives into rigidly defined gender roles but rather don't see a big differences between themselves and their wives.

Increased wife's autonomy. Another area of change the men commonly describe is that now their wives have a greater role in decision making and more freedom. Just as respect and friendship grow out of greater equality between people, so does increased autonomy. The following respondent lives in a village where women have little freedom of mobility. He describes an evolution in his attitude:

Earlier I had this feeling that if [my wife] went out of the house, I would lose face in the community. Now I know that her going out gives me prestige. We talk about fifty percent participation but earlier we didn't even give women ten percent participation.

His wife also describes her increased freedom:

For example today he has left me alone to sit and talk with you. This was not there earlier. I have the freedom go wherever I want to go. I can freely talk to anybody.

Why did he change?

Because of [MASVAW's] influence.

A different respondent describes how he has increased his wife's decision making power. Now he includes her in family financial matters and other decisions.

My question is why has she started participating in financial decision making?

Earlier her interest was there but I was the person who was not allowing her to do it... But I realized that until I involved her in budget planning I failed. I used to do things according to my whims and fancies and always got negative results. I didn't focus on the real issues... I think her decision is more important now... If both of us come together and decide what we need to do, then it will be much better. Then I thought of involving her.

How did this happen?
It's because of MASVAW.

And this respondent's wife describes her increased role as well:


What are the decisions which you can take in the family?

Possibly everything. There's no decision in the family which he says that I can't make... Earlier he used to say "what do you know about these things? I will decide this." But now he let's me make decisions.

In addition to demonstrating her increased decision making autonomy, this example shows her husband's increased trust and respect because he seeks out her opinion. Both of them benefit from her increased responsibility in family matters.

Sharing household work and childcare. Virtually all of the men we interviewed describe their increased role in helping with household work, including childcare. The amount varies in degree; some men (and their wives) say they assist on a daily basis while others help less frequently, but each man describes a transition in his attitude and behaviour. They are all striving to work from the standpoint of a new ideology, one that does not divide household labour into "women's" and "men's" work. They are at varying levels of making this transition, but they are all aware of the patriarchal implications of making this division, whether they are ready to fully embody the implications of it by doing any and every sort of household work. But every respondent is doing more household work than he did previously, and their wives all feel that this has made a very significant improvement in their own lives.

For example, Sameer's public contact tells us that Sameer is doing so much child care that "It looks as if [he] has given birth to his daughters." Kamla also describes his increased help:



Earlier I used to teach at a formal educational centre, and even if I reached home at eight in the night I'd have to cook, look after the animals, etc. ... But now if I am cooking, say I'm making rice, he will cut up the vegetables. He will also help in washing the children's clothes ... He used to do no work once he was home. His only concern was getting chai on time and receiving the food on time. Where is my chai? Where is my dinner? If he didn't get them on time then he would make noise about it.

In the case of Deepu, his wife is aware of a major change in his ideology. She reported that in the past Deepu would occasionally do some small favors for her, like help out in the kitchen, but he still espoused the ideology that "women are made for working at home." In contrast, today he is operating from an equity standpoint in which that there is no difference between "men's" and "women's" work. Because his ideology has shifted, he is no longer embarrassed to help her in front of visitors, whereas before he had to hide his participation.

New management of conflict and anger. Our respondents also told us about new ways that they deal with conflict and anger. First we discuss the story of Sameer. While he stopped physically abusing Kamla years ago, he continued to verbally abuse her and other people until he joined MASVAW. He describes in detail how he is now working towards managing his anger. Rather than release the tension on other people, he diffuses it by leaving the source of conflict. His friend independently described this change, telling the story of a dispute that Sameer had with his parents a month earlier. Here's how he says Sameer reacted:

I saw him get very angry and I was wondering what he would do next when he just left the space. I'm talking with him and he disappears. I got to know later that he had gone off to the market. ... When I compare what I have seen earlier in his anger with how he behaves now, I just wonder how this change has taken place.

Kamla told us that she participates with Sameer in this process of deflection and postponing confrontation. She said that when they have a conflict, she can see that he is angry so she waits for awhile and only later asks him what's wrong. At that time he's able to share with her. But in the past these events turned into abusive arguments.

Other men also report that they manage their anger by not speaking or by removing themselves from the source of stress. Another change in conflict management was described by a respondent who had never been physically violent. He said that he has become a better listener. Rather than impose his patriarchal power over his family and tell people how to behave, he attempts to seek resolution as a member of a group. "All the family tries to sit together and discuss it. If the problem lies in me, then I also try to understand it." Another

respondent said that now he writes his anger down on paper and then crumples it up. Yet another has become better able to share his anger with friends, partially because he is no longer ashamed of sharing his emotions.

Manish: Earlier I used to keep things in my heart. Now "I write what I should do which I am not able to do" when I get angry.

You used to do it earlier also?

No. I used to keep it with me. I didn't know how to express, whom to talk to.

Broader range of emotional expression. In addition to dealing with anger differently after having joined MASVAW, respondents say that they now express a broader range of other emotions, such as sadness and happiness. One man said that now he is able to easily cry. Other people react to this, telling him "you're like a woman you cry so easily." When we asked him how these comments make him feel he replied "I think it is a strength I have that I can feel this pain. I consider it a virtue."

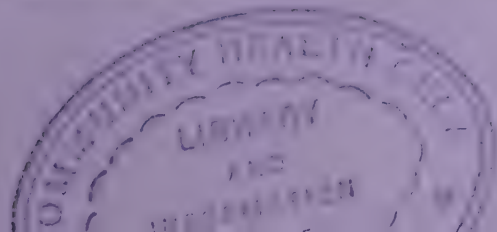
Better friendships: more listening, sharing, and depth. In addition to feeling that they are better able to express their emotions, many men emphasize changes in the degree to which they are able to share with their wives and friends, both male and female. For example, Ravi tells us that his friendships with women have more content today:

You are sharing that you also have a good relationship and you share with particular women. Did you have such friendships earlier as well?

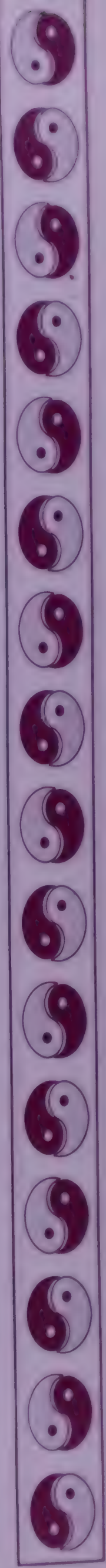
Yes, I had friendships with women earlier also. But that was very different. I used to think every third woman should be my wife. That time there was nothing as far as sharing is concerned. We always used to talk about lighter issues, for example, we might discuss about our classes. But that time the perspectives were very different....Even until recently, the sharing part was not there....

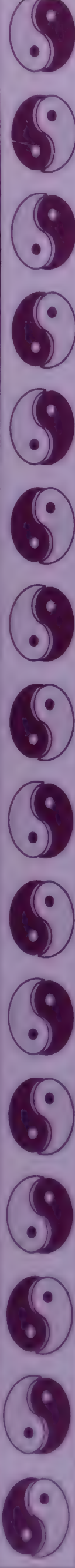
Ravi goes on to tell us that after having attended several MASVAW gender trainings, he now feels comfortable discussing sexuality with women, and that he can do so without having "anything else in mind." Not only have his relationships with women become more meaningful to him, he's also feeling more confident and able to express himself. "When your mind is clear," he says, "your communication is clear."

Avdresh says that he has better relationships with women today because he is no longer "loose" in his interaction with them. He no longer passes sarcastic comments and he controls how he interacts. He also said that he has become a better communicator in general because he no longer pressures people with his ideas. He associates



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becoming less patriarchal with becoming more participatory in his communication style.

These examples show that through MASVAW, men have gained a perspective that extends beyond their own masculine ego. Since they are thinking more seriously about the implications of their words and actions, they have become better listeners, more concerned with others, and they make better friends. They also feel more comfortable discussing emotions, problems, and feelings because they have come to believe that these expressions of emotion are acceptable for men.

Leadership, mentoring, influencing others. Up to this point, we have described changes that the MASVAW men have made in their own attitudes and behaviours (albeit changes that affect others). They are also engaged in influencing other people through leadership, mentoring, sponsoring events, and intervening in VAW cases. These activities occur on both formal and informal levels. Several of our MASVAW respondents have initiated and energized the MASVAW groups in their region; they are essential to what has made MASVAW the current success that it is. Most of the respondents have worked to increase membership in MASVAW. Often they spark other people's interest by example; other men see that something different and good has happened to them and they want to share in it as well.

One respondent, a university professor, has organized workshops for students on his university campus, inviting girls as well as boys. The objective was to find out where there was violence happening on campus. He said that at first the male students did not accept the fact that violence is occurring on campus, but when the females shared their experiences, explaining that the boy's own friends were involved in harassment, they finally accepted. They have sponsored a film festival, a poster competition, and an on-campus art project, all based on teaching people about the problem of violence. Based on these and other activities and interventions, they are now a large and active MASVAW group that meets regularly. The women are reporting that the campus atmosphere has transformed for the better.

One respondent who works in media sponsored a group discussion on a city cable channel. He invited students, politicians, and other influential leaders to participate in a live debate on issues of violence against women. Another respondent, a teacher at an all-male technical school, has started the practice of teaching MASVAW concepts to his students in weekly classes. One of the activities he has the boys do is write down some abuse they have made against women and then make a promise that they will never do it again. He showed us a stack of these "promise" papers, saying proudly: "At least I have sensitized more than 100 people. And after doing this I feel deeply satisfied. At least 100 people will stop violence. If I get the opportunity, and if I'm alive, then I will do more."


Our MASVAW respondents also carry their message into their daily conversations, into the way they react to comments people make on the train or to things they hear as they walk down the street. Some of the public contacts that we interviewed told us how they have changed their own lives based on what they have learned and seen through the MASVAW respondent.

The following excerpt is from a MASVAW man who has become a small celebrity in his city due to his commitment to this movement and his involvement in a well known VAW case. He is using his reputation as a way to further influence people, as he describes here:

In [my city] I have experimented with a new thing. I do not sit in any auto in which the driver uses abusive language. It has become a prestige issue for the driver that [I] am sitting in his auto. The moment he uses wrong words I get down.

He told us that he's constantly finding new and creative ways to fight violence. And a final example comes from the only female public contact that we interviewed. She stressed that she and other women have been strongly influenced by the MASVAW man's ideas. He has taught her to fight for rights, helping her and other female colleagues to realize "that this is your right and you should grab it – if somebody is not giving it to you, take it because it is yours."

Interventions in violence against women cases. A core activity for MASVAW men is to raise publicity and intervene in cases of violence against women. These are perhaps the most visible activities our respondents are engaged in. We learned about several cases of violence against women that the MASVAW men have taken initiative on. In one sexual abuse case, our respondent who works in media used his post to publicize the crime. He also contacted the authorities, saw to it that there was a medical inspection, and informed other NGOs about what was going on. In another example, a woman living in a MASVAW man's village was being beaten by her husband. When the respondent came to hear of it he planned to call the police but the woman begged him not to. So he made an alternate plan. He wrote up a police complaint and had it signed by many people in the village. Then he showed it to the woman's husband and told him that he had already given it to the police (even though he hadn't). Since that day (several months ago) this man has stopped abusing his wife. In another instance, a family had killed a woman and then threw her body off the roof of the house so that it would appear that she slipped and fell. In the post-mortem it was revealed that she had been strangled, but her family paid off the police and the case was closed. When our MASVAW respondent got wind of the situation, he brought this case to his local MASVAW group and they pressured for it to be reopened. It is an on-going case today, and the guilty family members are currently in jail. There are many, many more examples of MASVAW interventions against cases of violence. The change we



see in MASVAW men is their increased commitment and participation in reacting against violence.

Consequences of change: reactions, losses, gains

It would be a mistake to assume these changes have taken place through a painless process. When we asked one respondent if he felt that he was losing anything in making all these changes, he smiled and answered us jokingly: "Joining is no benefit for men. It's their loss. Until now males were in the oppressor's position. They held the rights of many people in their hands." Then he continued in a more serious tone, telling us that in fact he is a happier man because of what he's doing. While his initial statement may have been said in jest, there is some truth to both parts. Men experience many gains from the things they learn in MASVAW, but not without some losses. In this section we describe some of the consequences of change that the men described, both negative and positive.

Negative reactions, family conflict. Shifting from a patriarchal to an egalitarian gender framework is difficult. Change does not occur in a social vacuum; it affects other people as well – wives, parents, family members, friends, colleagues. All of these people have varying reactions which impact both a man's impression of changes he has already made and the degree to which he feels able to change more. In most cases our respondents described some family or community members who were not pleased with their MASVAW perspective. These reactions sometime result in increased conflict and anxiety for the men and their families.

Seven out of nine MASVAW respondents live in joint families. These seven men are in the process of integrating their new behaviours into some very old structures. A few of the men have comparatively progressive families that welcome change and the learning that comes along with it, but most of the men are facing hostility. For example, Sameer describes his parents' reaction as angry and dismayed; they think he has become his wife's slave. He relayed one incident in which his father observed him washing his child's *kathli* (quilted sheet). His father became very angry, insulting him with abuses. On another occasion his father wanted to beat him. Sameer's mother is upset that he lets his wife come and go without permission.

Often, these men were caught between the responsibility of being a husband and being a son; and they have to choose a side. It is expected that if there is a conflict between a man's wife and his parents the man will take his parents' side, requiring his wife to adapt and take the responsibility to change. But for MASVAW men the opposite was found to occur; men supported their wives, consequently leaving their parents shocked and hurt.

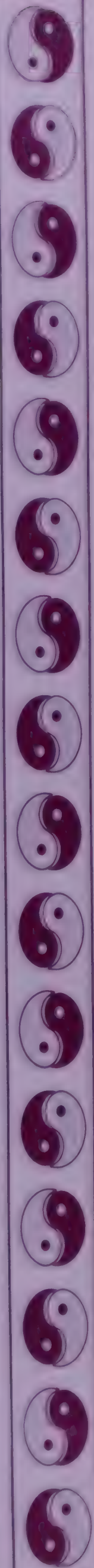
The pressure is not just on the men, it is also on their wives. In some cases parents blame their son's wife for changes occurring in him.

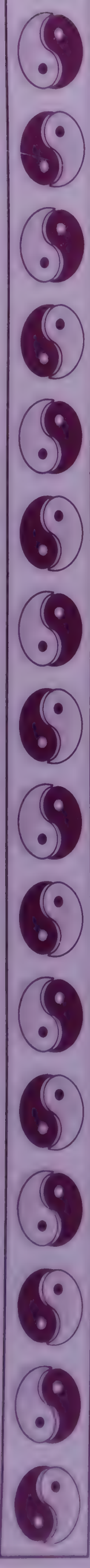
Some of the wives we interviewed said that family members taunted them, accusing them of forcing their husbands to do “women’s work.” They tell her that she is not doing her duties and that she is a bad wife. We found that wives’ reactions to their husband’s changes were multi-dimensional. On the one hand, they are pleased with their more communicative, equitable relationship; they are happy to have greater freedom and decision making power. But on the other hand, they sometimes feel discomfort in letting their husband help out in “women’s work.” This happened for two different reasons: first, some wives themselves hold a traditional gender ideology. Even though changes are to their benefit, if women are rooted in the patriarchal world they too may oppose them. As a result of this, more than one MASVAW man emphasized that women should attend MASVAW trainings as well so that they might experience consciousness-raising on gender equality. Second, those wives who whole-heartedly support their husband’s changes may still feel uncomfortable due to the family pressure and blame they face.

Hard to escape patriarchy. The story of Avdhesh is an example of tensions that can result from being gender sensitive. While Avdhesh and his wife have great communication and a remarkably equitable relationship, they are surrounded with opposition. They live in a joint family with Avdhesh’s parents and brother. Earlier his parents objected to Sangeeta because she refused to be a traditional wife: she didn’t wear a sari or bindi, she used her own name, and so on. When Avdhesh began to actively support all of her choices, the family turned against him as well. Avdhesh describes his father as a violent and angry man, and both Avdhesh and Sangeeta recounted examples of verbally abusive family fights.

Sangeeta relayed that her sister-in-law, a housewife, constantly puts her down for being educated and having a full-time job. Her sister-in-law attempts to show her superiority by making efforts to be the “ideal” wife and daughter-in-law. She does things to win her parents-in-law’s favour like touching their feet, doing housework, and wearing a sari. There is competition between Sangeeta’s and her sister-in-law’s children over “who’s mother cares more?”

Avdhesh and Sangeeta have attempted to create an atmosphere of peace through family discussions and creative solutions but to no success. For example, Sangeeta and her sister-in-law share household cooking and cleaning responsibilities. Avdhesh wanted to do his share of the housework as well, and he and his wife are both very busy. So Avdhesh hired a cook and housecleaner who could take over all of the work for both Sangeeta’s part and her sister-in-law’s part. But his sister-in-law refuses to let the housecleaner touch the common living areas or the cook to make her share of the meals—she insists on doing her “wifely duty” by herself. So now the cook and cleaner only help out with Avdhesh and Sangeeta’s individual living space and meals. This atmosphere of hostility is difficult for both Sangeeta and Avdhesh. Each of them described how fortunate they





are to have each other, but they see this conflict as one of the costs of their choice to support gender equality. Patriarchy lives under their roof and they can't escape it simply by changing their own behaviour. As a result of this tension, Avdhesh says that he is often tired. He has given up trying to "develop" his family. He has to balance his satisfaction in doing work he believes in with the difficulties he faces at home. (Since the study was completed Avdhesh and Sangeeta have left their joint family and have set up their separate househdd.-Ed)

Men also described opposition from their colleagues and tension in their communities. One man has been warned that he should keep out of other people's business and not interfere in private lives. Another respondent said that when people see him doing "women's work" they are puzzled and ask: "he's a respectable man, he works in an organization – why is he doing this?" Men are sometimes told that their ideas are ridiculous, overly ideological, too bold. Numerous stories demonstrate that MASVAW men are forced constantly to defend their ideology against an opposing value-system. They have to maintain stamina and energy in the face of frequent resistance.

Other "costs" of MASVAW. The men described other costs besides people's resistance. Many mentioned that they have less time to spend with their families because they are so engaged in MASVAW violence cases and other activities. One man said that a disadvantage he associates with MASVAW is the time it's taking from his family. "It's killing my time. ... I get so tired that I'm not able to help out in the household as much as I'd like." Men's wives described some of the costs as well. One woman mentioned the lack of time, but said that it is balanced out by the advantages: "One loss is time. ... but ideally I can't say that the loss of time is a disadvantage because he gets to know new things and that's good. If you learn something new then you have to pay for it by something." One wife relayed to us that her communication with her husband has increased to such a great degree that the bar has been raised and she has much higher expectations. Now, if there is some instance in which her husband doesn't share with her, she feels very hurt and disappointed. It's something she considers a sort of loss within a gain. Finally, one wife said that her family has less money now that her husband is doing so much volunteer work. He is less focused on their family business and they are suffering a financial loss.

Benefits and positive reactions. While the challenges MASVAW men confront are oftentimes formidable, we observed that men continue to work energetically on MASVAW issues. When we asked them what they gain, they said they are motivated both by the benefits they personally reap and by the satisfaction they get from helping to change society for others. Here are some of the benefits they feel they've received from MASVAW.

Self-development. Several respondents discussed with us the satisfaction they gain from developing themselves and learning new ideas. One respondent who lives in a village told us:

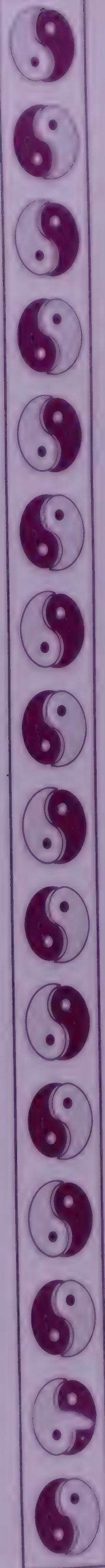
When there are meetings I ask men to come with me and they say "What will I get?" and I say "Nothing." But I tell them that you will gain something very important, and that is new learning, which you won't get anywhere else, and from which you can learn how to become a better person. And that is a lot.

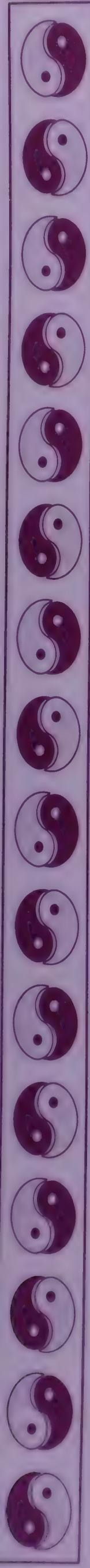
Other men echoed this sentiment, saying that they have had the chance to develop their personality, become more confident, and more able to express their feelings and emotions.

Respect and recognition. While MASVAW men often face opposition in their families and with certain people, they are highly and large held in high regard by their communities as a result of the changes they've made. Some of them have gained considerable recognition and have become community leaders – people listen when they talk. They are held up as models and mentors whom people want to emulate. For example, Sameer told us several stories demonstrating that he has gained elevated status in his community. He said: "People see me and they don't make fun of me. They admire me and try to practice it themselves. Other men take inspiration from me." Kamla echoed these positive sentiments, saying that people look at their marriage with deep admiration and often ask her what they can do to make the same changes in their lives. She told us of a woman who asked her husband "if they can be like that, then why can't we be like that too?" People have watched a remarkable transformation unfold in Sameer's life, so they know that it is possible to become something different and better. One can imagine that it would be a big boost to your self-esteem to have people admire, respect, and want to imitate you.

There were several other examples of the increased respect MASVAW men have received since they've focused on stopping violence against women. One respondent relayed that one day when he was taking an auto rickshaw with his parents, the driver said "namaste bahaiya" to him. When he reached his destination and searched in his pockets for the driver's payment, he said "I can't take money from you. You work so much in the villages. What would I tell my wife?" Being recognized and admired is a compelling factor motivating MASVAW men.

Better marriage. Men also told us that gender-equalizing behaviour leads to a better, more satisfying relationship with your partner. No respondent said that he felt he had lost something as a result of doing more household work or giving his wife greater freedom and decision-making power. No one said he missed having all of the power and control. If anything, the men have become more empowered through their new roles in their communities. They stress that having a more





equal partnership is definitely an improvement. Any negative associations with their household behaviour changes were coming from the reactions of other family members, not from their personal feelings about their role.

Personal Satisfaction at contributing to positive changes. Our MASVAW respondents said that they feel good about themselves because they know they're making positive changes in the world. One man said that he tells people "discover the enjoyment of leaving something," referencing how it feels to abandon patriarchal behaviours. They emphasized to us that thinking less selfishly brings happiness and enjoyment. They also said that the effort to make other people understand MASVAW perspectives gives them pleasure.

The men made specific mention of the satisfaction they get from intervening in VAW cases. They described how several cases of abuse and murder would be left hidden if MASVAW did not pressurise the police and media to expose the cases and prosecute the perpetrators. Finally, MASVAW men are thinking about the impact they will have on future generations: "Men have to share the power because the way we are behaving with our children today will be how they also behave with their own wives and parents tomorrow," said one respondent. Their knowledge that by changing today they are impacting the future is a major source of satisfaction.

What about MASVAW has been most influential for the change?

So far we have described changes men attribute to MASVAW. We were interested to know what specific activities or aspects of MASVAW helped produce and maintain the behaviour changes. In this section I discuss what they highlighted.

The most important resource that men mentioned over and over again is the support and inspiration they are getting from other members of MASVAW. Here is one of several excerpts from the different interviews in which a man says that he is inspired by the example set by other MASVAW men.

I like most this thing: so many sensitive persons get together and join this group. They help us emotionally and they energize me. If they're doing these things, then I can do it. So many times I've received complaints and protest working on MASVAW but I thought "it's okay, so many people are leaving things to work with MASVAW, so I will see."

Here, another MASVAW respondent also finds a model in MASVAW members:

There is no difference between preaching and practice in the members of MASVAW. First they do and then they say. So I

also thought that I, too, should do like that. First I should do and then I should say.

Our respondents told us that MASVAW gives them a platform to discuss their personal and social issues. They emphasize how invaluable it is that they have formed a community of like-minded people with whom they can share their problems.

For example, if I'm bothered by something – people are expecting something from me or laughing at me, then I can share this with other members of MASVAW...They hear me and aren't surprised...They pat me on the back and say "don't worry, all of this happens."

They are reminded that they are not alone in questioning patriarchy. They also gain energy to fight against the negative reactions they receive from the knowledge that other people have experienced similar hardships and yet continue on.

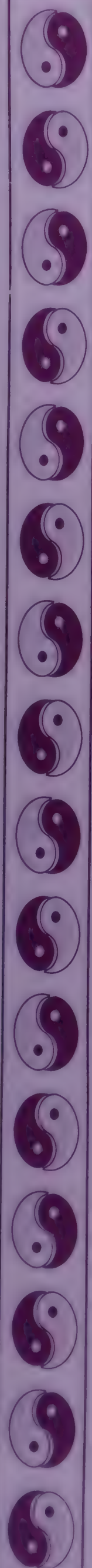
Men also brought up specific aspects of MASVAW gender trainings. One man said that the fact that they discussed the issues continuously for seven days, day and night, was very important to him. His intuition is that it takes time and repetition for the new ideas to really take hold. Perhaps a single day of information cramming would only have left this respondent defending patriarchy. Other men, too, described how it took time for the ideas to sink in. Some said that the first training "went over my head." Some felt that MASVAW ideas were "stupid" for six months before they really began to understand. They credit continuity both within the trainings and in the MASVAW community at large with helping them through this gradual process.

Several men described the strong impact of games and activities done in trainings, such as the role-playing game described earlier in which a man imagines himself as a woman.

When I started thinking about all the work that women do from five in the morning I realized that they do a lot that we don't consider "work." And we men go and sit on the street corner doing nothing.

Through this activity, the men are able to look within themselves and feel what it must be like to live someone else's reality. It gives perspective.

Finally, many men discussed the impact of the films and articles disseminated by MASVAW. One man specifically mentioned an article he received on the two-child norm. "I had always believed that [the two child norm] is very essential and related to population," he said. "But after the article I understand that the two child norm leads to an increase in VAW, and that type of concept became clear." Another respondent discussed the cartoons created by Ganesh, who has



helped in developing many of the illustrated materials. One man said that the most important incident which affected him in MASVAW was a documentary film called Nasreen O Nasreen. It was his first time that he realized violence against women was happening all around him. He described his shock at the realization:

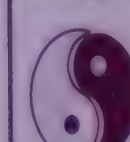
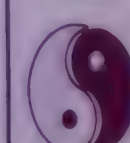
When they asked me for a response immediately after the show, I could not say anything. I told them 'I can't say what I'm feeling.' I was quite confused that [the perpetrators] are the people around us. ... I used to think people blame all men, as I had a negative opinion about the feminist movement ... But after the film show I realized that we and only we are responsible for this. And the film motivated me to join.

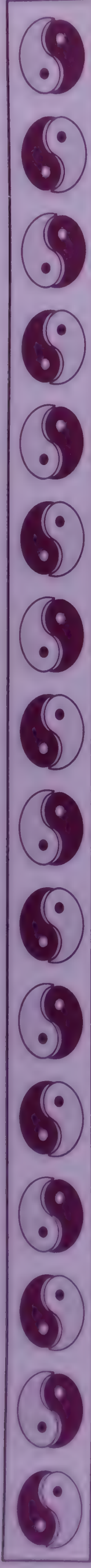
Discussion

Potential risks in the process of change - When one is first presented with a new and alternative way of doing something, one has a few options. Oftentimes it seems easier to continue doing things as before because of old habits, established practice, a conditioned reflex reaction or simply inertia. To act upon new knowledge or understanding may require some additional effort or incentive, a motivation of tangible gains, deeply desired outcomes, a cherished prize, otherwise one may prefer to tuck the information or insight into the back of his mind, and it may even be erased from memory. When this change is against the direction and grain of established social norms the motivation for changed behaviour is more difficult. It is sometimes easier to act as if you have changed by espousing the new perspective but continue doing the same old things – particularly if espousing that perspective will make you look better or help you get social approval. In this case there can be deep divides between behaviour in the public and personal domains. Finally, if one is deeply persuaded by the new knowledge, understanding or insight then one may feel compelled to act, regardless of the difficulty or the challenges. Adopting gender equalising behaviour requires this courage born out of conviction because the apparent challenges are many and the gains are not so easily envisaged.

To change one's behaviour is not just the flick of a switch from an "old" to a "new" behaviour. Change is not a moment, it is a process, oftentimes an endless one. Furthermore, just because you've shifted ideology doesn't automatically lead to overwhelming and comprehensive changes in all domains of one life. There may be some things one can change more easily than others or some which one is more willing to change than others. One can easily display contradictory behaviours as the older and new value-systems keep tripping each other up in one's mind. All of this has to be accepted as a natural part of the process of change.

The new ideology we are concerned here with, is that of gender equality and the pre-existing one is patriarchy. The gender equality has in the recent past been espoused as a desired value, especially in the realm of social and human development. In the course of our study we learned from our interviews that "pretending" you have changed without actually acting on it – is a very common response among development agencies and other "progressives" in Uttar Pradesh. Men told us that lots of people claim to advocate gender equality but behind their closed doors they live very patriarchal lives. Without naming names, they referred to the "dual nature" of many of those around them, emphasizing the degree to which they feel the need for MASVAW to be set apart from this practice. During one of our focus group discussions with a MASVAW group, it was explained





that the group is much less focused on increasing membership in MASVAW than in monitoring the members they already have to assure that they are living up to the MASVAW values. They stressed that increasing numbers cannot come at the cost of watering down the meaning of MASVAW.

In contrast to simply “talking the talk,” all of the MASVAW men we interviewed in this study have been moved deeply to make a genuine shift in their lifestyles. As a collective, they said they are determined to do more than expound upon gender equality – they want to produce personal and social results. We observed that the men are different points in the transition from traditional to gender equitable behaviours. In fact, even within the behaviour of a single person, actions would vary from one situation to another. This makes sense as people’s minds are a complex mix of many behaviours, emotions, and ideas from the past and present producing conflicting results.

Since the process of change is a long term endeavour and the attainment of equality is at this point an ideal, it seems prudent to discuss some potential risks that may happen if MASVAW is not careful to discuss and manage this change in very realistic terms. The first is that men might believe they are now behaving equitably in their interactions with women when actually they have only moved only slightly from the traditional patriarchal position. The second risk is that men may believe that they are completely operating from a gender equity ideology when actually many patriarchal tendencies that they are unaware of continue to motivate their behaviours.

The challenge of ‘paternalism’: - The risk of paternalism is one of the most enduring challenges for men as they fight against violence against women. Protecting women, the weaker sex, is sometimes an obvious choice from a “protectionist” standpoint. This approach is not based on the principles of gender equality and is merely reinforcing the patriarchal notions of bravery and courage in men and helplessness in women. The traditional role of the ‘man in the family’ is to protect the women in his family. Thus the quality of men’s work on violence against women, cannot be solely judged from public action to prevent or redress violence but from actions which promote and bring about justice in both the public and personal realm.

The drive to fight violence in order to “save” women from harm may emanate from a patriarchal framework, while the drive to address violence because it emerges from an extreme form of subordination and inequality emanates from a gender equality framework. When a man is working from a gender equality framework, then addressing physical violence is simply a small part of the struggle for equality. Hence, the elimination of physical abuse is not the goal, it is one step towards the attainment of the goal: equality. It is possible that in the state of equality in a relationship there will be constant disagreements and contestations. These must not be confused with violence. However if a man fights physical violence from a paternalistic mindset,

it is possible to achieve a violence free state – a situation of total and in some cases willing subordination and compliance. And thus patriarchal objectives are satisfied and power is expressed and understood without any recourse to violence.

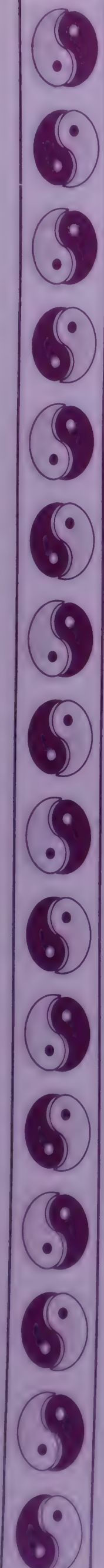
It may be difficult to understand what motivates a person, at any given time, we can be a messy mix of opposing ideologies. One possible outcome of this confusion is that a man may inadvertently act from a patriarchal stance when he thinks he is acting from an egalitarian stance. We have an example of this in our study. In one story recounted to us by a public contact, a MASVAW man actually reinforces patriarchy and encourages the continuation of a situation of subordination. The public contact did not intend to suggest this at all, in fact, he was using the story as an example of how the MASVAW man so caring and patient in his communication with women. It was supposed to be an example of his improvement in relating to women.

In the story, a woman was complaining to Jaideep, the MASVAW man, that her husband has been unfaithful to her and so she wanted to have a relationship with someone else. Jaideep explained to her that just because her husband is unfaithful doesn't mean she should leave him. But the women defended her position saying that all men are not the same and she thinks she can find someone better. Jaideep patiently explained to her that really there's no guarantee another man will be any different, saying "if you refuse your husband and treat him badly then what's the guarantee that this husband or the next one *who is also a man* will support you? No, the new one won't support you either." The public contact said that Jaideep explained that she needed to stay in such a kind manner that the woman began to cry. She said "what can I do? He beats me everyday after drinking." To this Jaideep replied "you won't be able to force him to stop drinking but you can ensure that he reduces drinking." And that was as much of the story we were told.

In this instance, a woman was looking for a way out of an oppressive and abusive relationship. Rather than acknowledge the violence she was facing and help her find a way out, Jaideep encouraged her to bear it and tried to make her understand that any man may be this way, so she should stay with the one she has. It's hard to imagine a more patronizing and patriarchal response to her dilemma. Clearly neither the public contact nor Jaideep were aware of this reinforcement of an unjust system that supports men but not women.

This example demonstrates the dilemmas that take place during the process of change that we have discussed earlier. In the same interview, we heard of many other instances in which Jaideep demonstrated equity-oriented behaviour, but in this story his support was for patriarchy and he was not aware of it.





The humility to accept that a process has begun rather than feel that the goal has been achieved. ("I have arrived") - While all of the men we interviewed have increased their level of household helping out, it tended to be sporadic, depending upon the availability of time and when help was necessary. Oftentimes the examples of when they assist were on special occasions – when the wife is ill, when visitors are coming. Some men said they participate on a daily basis, but even in their cases it appeared that they did some amount of work, but they certainly were not sharing the core responsibility for household work, at least not equally. In a social setting like Uttar Pradesh where men will not even step foot in a kitchen, it is remarkable for men to assume *any* of these roles – it shows that he is challenging the gender norms that prescribe him out of the household domain.

However, it is imperative not to lose sight of the difference between a what is a major step in the *direction* towards gender equality and what is the actual *attainment* of gender equality. It is important that a man not feel that he has “arrived” just because he is doing some, may be even token help. Even if any amount of help may seem like a small miracle, it is crucial that he the man not feel that now he’s treating his wife as an equal. The work he is doing may be a massive improvement, but it is not an equal amount.

Equality in the household means that the man shares equal responsibility for making sure that dinner is served, children are fed, dressed, cleaned, and the house is tended. It would be interesting to do a thought experiment with the men we interviewed and ask them, “would you be willing to trade-off nights with your wife, where you are the house-maker on Monday, cooking dinner, cleaning, taking care of the children, etc, and she takes the responsibility on Tuesday, you on Wednesday, and so on?” It’s not a claim that this particular division of labour is the ideal way – perhaps a couple would like to work together and share in a different way – but as a hypothetical example, it may help men to imagine how much responsibility a fifty-fifty, equal relationship gives to each person. We can not say how many of the men we interviewed would be willing to take on this level of work, but based on what we learned, it is possible that they are not at this point. The men may not feel comfortable with true equality in all domains of a relationship.

However, true equality is certainly a subject they are comfortable talking about. Many of them emphasized the necessity for a 50/50 world. This is what they tell others and it is what they say they want for themselves. But one wonders, do they *really* want it? The amount of change that men have already made is something to acknowledge and celebrate. But they need not to get overly confident of how much they have achieved. Perhaps it is time to begin a discussion of what they are *not* doing, as well as what they *are* doing.

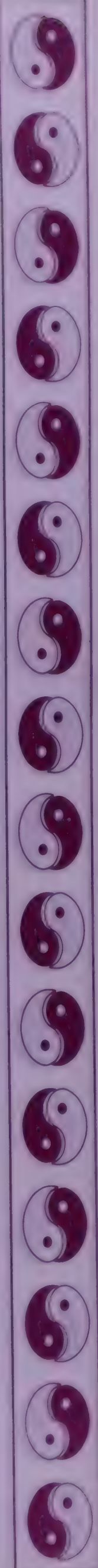
In fact, two of our respondents did talk to us about what they are not able to do. One of them, Rama, said that “my wife prepares morning tea. I can’t do it. It’s my weakness. I am not able to be involved in making tea.” He gave us no further explanation than that this is a mental block for him. The important question here is that does his wife have the same autonomy to claim any similar concessions. What would he say to his wife if she did so? We can only surmise.

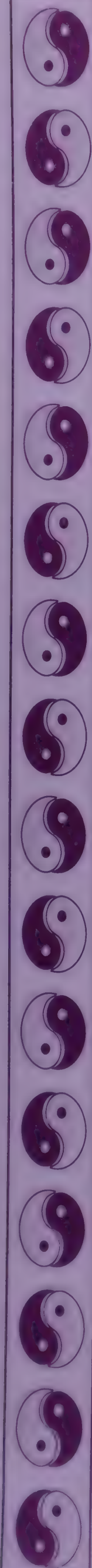
Another respondent, Manoj, discussed his mental block in greater depth. He actually quantified for us how much he thinks he’s able to practice what he believes: he said he can do about seventy-five percent of what he thinks he should do. He told us that although he has changed many habits, he’s not able to do the remaining twenty-five percent because of his “socialization.” He can’t do “women’s work” like sweeping the floor, cleaning the toilet, cleaning the roof. We asked him what’s preventing him and he said: “Male ego. Masculinity. I haven’t seen anyone in my family doing this kind of work so I feel hesitant. If anybody sees me they will laugh at me.” Yet he acknowledges that in terms of his ideological framework, he thinks that men should do an equal share of all household work. While Manoj is the only respondent who described these limitations in such clear and honest terms, it is likely that all of the men experience limitations to some degree.

Rama’s and Manoj’s honesty is reassuring because it shows that they are aware of the lack of congruence between their belief system and their actions. This lack of complete alignment is natural; as described above, it is a part of the transition process. It is possible that eventual attainment of equality will not occur within a short timeframe. What is important is that men acknowledge, confront, and grapple with the contradictions that will necessarily be a part of who they are. It is a positive sign that Rama and Manoj are discussing it – one hopes that these conversations are frequent.

How can MASVAW help? These examples remind us that change is a confusing and slow process. MASVAW has already made a substantial start in introducing men to the idea of gender equality, in redefining violence against women, and in creating a forum for change. MASVAW is a powerful change agent; now it must also help sustain the change. We heard men describe the essential role of MASVAW in being a support network for them. Creating a platform to voice their perspectives, providing a space to work through change, bringing people together as mentors and friends are factors that many men cited as the most influential role of MASVAW in their lives.

Providing the space to open up and share - While MASVAW is all of these things, we did get the impression that once men have attended a gender training, a substantial part of their subsequent involvement in MASVAW related work is about VAW cases. Even though men cherish the opportunity to share confusions and dilemmas the structured MASVAW interactions do not seem to





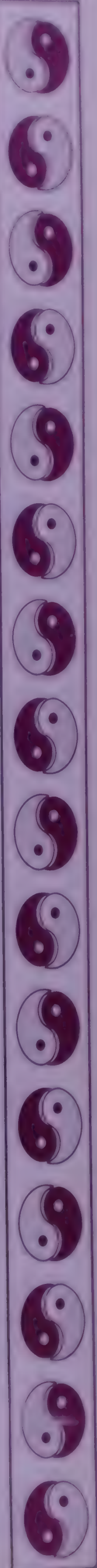
address this need. MASVAW needs to strengthen its role as a space for men to evaluate and discuss their own behaviour. Some questions which we did not ask but now they seem very important are the following. How often have MASVAW men talked about their participation in household work? Do they ever discuss with each other how many of them used to force their wives to have intercourse? Would it be easy for them to discuss how challenging it is to live up to the changes they are trying to make?

Reinforcing change, overcoming resistances - If MASVAW truly purports to change men, then it needs to take on the role of a support network in which men share their personal struggles with change on a regular basis. MASVAW men are already aware that change must begin within oneself, and the desire to change has been ignited. Now MASVAW can help to sustain that change and call men to account for their actions, in a public but intimate and trusting space. Here, they can work through the struggles and resistances that they experience in their families, at work, and in their community. Also, in discussing what they are doing, they may discover contradictions they weren't aware of. Currently, MASVAW men are friends and share some of their hardships with each other. But there is not a formal structure for sharing and up to this point it appears that only some men are discussing their personal problems with gender equality.

Conclusion

The study has been able to provide very clear and unambiguous answers to some of the vexing questions that we had set out to find answers to. It has proven beyond doubt that men can start to change towards believing in and trying out more gender equitable behaviour. The study also proves that there are some very concrete gains that men can expect from gender equality, from increased self esteem, to better relationships with one's partner as well as with peers. No man in this study betrayed a sense of regret, but on the contrary there was a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. This disproves the assumption that if men give away some of their power and control over women, then they will be dis-empowered, or weakened. It clearly disproves the 'zero-sum game' assumption of power in a relationship where power sharing reduces power from one part of the equation, and proves that gender equality has the possibility to empower women as well as men.

However many questions also remain, fundamental among them is the question that if some men can change, albeit under certain circumstances, is it possible that others too can endeavour to change, because without a large scale movement of change the relatively ambitious objective of MASVAW to bring about large scale societal changes may not be achieved even in the long run.



Annexure One :**Introduction to SAHAYOG and its relationship with MASVAW**

SAHAYOG is a non-profit voluntary organization, registered in 1992. SAHAYOG worked directly with rural communities for almost a decade in 60 villages of one block in Almora district of Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand) on women's empowerment and gender equality among rural youth, among other issues. In 2000, after the partition of the state into Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand (then Uttaranchal) SAHAYOG relocated its offices to Lucknow and also changed its development strategy from directly engaging in grassroots activities to supporting and building capacities for engaging in grassroots development work. SAHAYOG also started working explicitly on the issue of Violence Against Women from this point onwards.

SAHAYOG was a key partner in a state-wide campaign against violence against women (VAW), launched in Uttar Pradesh, known as the HISAB Abhiyan. HISAB in Hindi means accounts and is also a Hindi acronym for *hinsa sahana band* – or stop tolerating violence. During this campaign a number of male workers of voluntary agencies were involved in mobilising and supporting women who were at the forefront of the campaign. This campaign provided SAHAYOG functionaries the insight that men needed to be actively engaged in this work.

SAHAYOG organized a consultation in 2002 in Uttar Pradesh to discuss concerns around VAW and gender inequality with male representatives of NGOs as well as some individual men. The meeting led to setting up the network called Men's Action for stopping Violence against Women (MASVAW) who felt committed for bringing about a change within themselves and within institutions towards gender equality; and responsible to raise their voices to break the silence around VAW.

SAHAYOG is associated with MASVAW, primarily in two capacities. Firstly it hosts the secretariat of MASVAW, providing office space and human and technical support for strengthening and supporting the network, which is now spread over a large geographical area of the state. Secondly SAHAYOG provides the technical resource support to the network in the form of providing training support, developing and producing appropriate learning and training materials, and also supporting the process of documentation and research to support MASVAW activities.

In addition to its association with MASVAW, SAHAYOG functions as a resource centre that supports Work with Men and Boys in different

states of India as well as across South Asia. SAHAYOG has been spreading the idea that work with men and boys is also imperative for moving towards gender equality. SAHAYOG has also been providing support on Work with Men and Boys as trainers and facilitators for a wide range of people, including teachers, health providers, youth, media persons, prison officers, NGO or project staff, over the last five years.

Annexure Two:

Study Team

Principal Researcher : Liz Mogford, MPH and PhD student in Sociology, University of Washington, Seattle.

Research Associate: Seema Parveen, SAHAYOG

Translation : Pinki Solanki

Inputs in research design and support during the research process :
Satish K Singh, SAHAYOG

Support during research process : Ravi Jeena, SAHAYOG

Research Supervisor : Abhijit Das, Advisor, SAHAYOG, and Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle.

Research Report : Liz Mogford, Abhijit Das

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